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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Letter dated 18 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text of a statement by the President of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Aleksandr Lukashenko, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing in Helsinki of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 30.

(*Signed*) Alyaksandr **Sychov**
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Annex to the letter dated 18 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the President of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. A. G. Lukashenko, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

The signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe a quarter of a century ago in Helsinki marked the conclusion of the unprecedented negotiations among the representatives of 33 European countries, the United States of America and Canada on the drafting of a document that has become the cornerstone for building a Europe free of dividing lines. The signing of the Final Act began a qualitatively new phase in the development of the continent, which for many centuries had been the scene of wars and conflicts.

Over the past years, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has become a key regional organization with a developed system of institutions and mechanisms and whose jurisdiction extends from Vancouver to Vladivostok and includes all aspects of security.

The Istanbul Summit of OSCE in 1999 was the outgoing century's final concerted effort to realize the desire of peoples for mutually advantageous cooperation and confidence-building measures, the impetus for which was given in Helsinki on 1 August 1975, and a historic milestone in the laying of the groundwork for European security in the twenty-first century.

Today it is very important that the principles contained in the documents of these European forums should become a real guide to action and not remain mere lip service.

Belarus supports the efforts being made to strengthen OSCE and declares its commitment to the fundamental principles of the document signed in Helsinki. Any attempt to depart from these principles, which have stood the test of time and have been confirmed in international practice, can lead to serious consequences that jeopardize regional security.

Belarus is in favour of strengthening all aspects of security in full accordance with the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act and other basic OSCE documents. Military and political measures without the concerted efforts of States in the field of economic and environmental security will not guarantee an untroubled future for Europe. Human rights are an important — but not the only — component of the concept of comprehensive security. The recent tendency to focus on human rights issues and the increasingly obvious transformation of OSCE into an instrument for the "democratic monitoring" of countries of the former Soviet bloc demonstrate the clear intention of some members of OSCE to concentrate that organization's activities on individual aspects that are advantageous to them and on "difficult" countries instead of solving a whole range of urgent problems relating to the development of Europe as a whole.

In this connection, I should like to draw attention to the danger of narrowing the competence of OSCE, the logical consequence of which will be its loss of prestige as an impartial proponent of the interests of all its members.

Unfortunately, the economic potential of OSCE envisaged in the Final Act has so far remained largely untapped. Belarus is in favour of stepping up the activities of OSCE in the economic and environmental fields, eliminating discrimination and trade barriers among the countries of the region under its jurisdiction, and creating conditions for minimizing the negative consequences of the expansion of economic unions for States that do not belong to them. It is particularly important that OSCE should provide the necessary political impetus for mutually advantageous economic cooperation and to develop clear-cut mechanisms for monitoring the obligations arising from such cooperation.

In the military and political fields, Belarus intends to press for the further strengthening of OSCE as the principal universal body for ensuring European security, greater effectiveness of the work of its main institutions, particularly its collective bodies, and the preservation of consensus as the basis for the operation of that organization. Belarus will actively support the priority role of OSCE, as defined in the Charter on European Security, in settling disputes in the region under its jurisdiction on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member countries, and strive for equal security of States that are members of military groups and of those that are not members of such groups.

Belarus is prepared to engage in an ongoing dialogue with the leading European structures, particularly OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union, on questions of compliance with international obligations in the field of human rights, but only on the basis of equality and without the application of "double standards".

Belarus takes seriously its share of the responsibility for guaranteeing security and improving the welfare of Europe. A stable social development, in spite of economic difficulties, the absence of inter-ethnic or religious conflicts, in spite of a multi-ethnic population, the absence of any territorial claims or border tension with its neighbours are Belarus's important and direct contribution to the enhancement of European security. Belarus cannot exist outside of Europe, just as Europe cannot be one and indivisible without Belarus. The timely elimination of Belarus's political difficulties with a number of countries members of OSCE will only help to consolidate this constructive policy. A good basis for this is the holding in October 2000 of democratic, free and fair parliamentary elections in the Republic of Belarus.

Patience, progressive confidence-building and recognition of the supremacy of law and diplomacy — this is the path to genuine European unity based on the values common to all mankind.